

SCHOOL TALK

A Newsletter of M.S.A.D. #54

Winter 2009

E.O.E.

Vol. 15, No. 2

After School Program Earns Praise



Mr. Clark, Ms. Cormier and Ms. Wallace help with homework.

Classrooms are far from empty after regular school hours at both SAMS and SAHS this year due to the addition of the new After School Program (ASP). A five-year 21st Century Community Learning Centers Grant that provides \$300,000 a year for the first three years, and a percentage amount the final two years, supports this program. Goals of the grant include academic improvement for students who need extra help, cultural enrichment and improving health and wellness for all students, and furthering

integration of the schools with the community. A twelve-member advisory board is made up of MSAD administration and members of the community.

Director of the program is Josh Clark. A 2001 graduate of SAHS, Clark received his degree from Norwich University in Northfield, Vermont. After working in Vermont for three years, he is happy to be back in Skowhegan.

“One of our aims is to provide the appropriate

See After School Program Page 2

After School Program Continued from Page 1

level of structure and still encourage student participation in choosing activities which interest them," commented Mr. Clark.



Students enjoy Nature Study.

At SAMS such activities include a Homework Lab, gym games, dramatics, video lab, weight room, acoustic and electric guitar, nature study, cooking, dancing, and many more, with possible changes throughout the year. Julie Wallace, site coordinator for the program at SAMS, is very pleased to have some high school students as volunteer leaders. Building relationships with the younger students will help to provide a bridge between the middle school and the high school and make the transition easier, she feels. Although a number of district teachers and staff are involved in the program, volunteers from the community at large would be most welcome to help fill the needs of the over sixty students per day who attend the program. Individuals who might wish to share their talents and interests with young people are encouraged

to contact either Mr. Clark or Ms. Wallace at SAMS.

When asked for comments about the program, SAMS

students were very positive. "It gives me time to be together with my friends and hang out," one



The fun of creating something beautiful.

boy said. "I like coming to school better because I look forward to the after school activities," said

another student. "The activities offered are ones we like to do," said a third. All agreed that the Homework Lab was a great advantage. The opportunity to get teacher help is appreciated. "Parents don't always know the answers," one girl commented. "Because I'm in band, I miss study halls during the day. Homework Lab gives me a chance to catch up," said another student. "It gives me more free time when I get home."

Favorite activities at SAMS include "lots of stuff I wouldn't get to do at home", said one student. The following were some specific activities mentioned as particularly popular: gym ("wicked fun!"), crafts, cooking, weight room, game room, drama, nature programs, and simply social time with friends. Suggestions

for additional activities included non-competitive outdoor games

After School Program Continued from page 2

“just for fun” such as soccer, kickball, skiing and snowshoeing. One student suggested a band with kids conducting and maybe

After School Program includes a mandatory Homework Lab for those students in freshman level classes who have missed



SAMS student collects gym balls.

playing student-written music. Another wish was for more gym choices that would entail longer use of the gym that is now used for basketball games during the



Cooking is a rewarding skill.

second hour. Drawing was another item on the list of suggestions.

At the high school, the

assignments. An additional offering is the PLATO lab that is an on-line tutorial for remediation and credit recovery. Teachers choose modules of appropriate chapters for individual students to accomplish which are then followed by a mini test to check on success. At present, this lab is used largely in math courses but potentially can include work in English, Social Studies and Science. A broad range of enrichment activities is also available at the high school similar in subject to those at the middle school. At the end of the day a 4:15 bus takes program participants from both schools to

drop-off sites in the six district towns.

Comments from SAHS participants in the After School Program were as enthusiastic as those from SAMS. “I look forward to it at the end of the school day,” said a freshman. “It gives me something to do after school rather than just going home to watch TV,” said another student. “I live out of town and away from a lot of my friends, but the ASP is a place where there are other kids my age to hang out with,” was a third comment. “I like the freedom. It is not as structured as school,” one student noted. Another wished that “ASP would also be offered on Fridays”. “Free food! And the extra help with work if you need it,” was yet another positive observation.

The enthusiasm of students, parents and teachers clearly shows that the After School Program is off to a very successful start. More students now see the schools as more than just the site of their



Student receives guitar instruction.

academic world. Director Clark considers the program “a first step in a cultural shift in the students’ view of school as an integral part of the community.”

District Promotes Healthy Lifestyle

MSAD #54 District Health Coordinator, Velda Yamashiro, considers her position a resource for school and the community.

Using a team approach, she

works with the district food service, physical education,

nurses, counselors, classroom and health teachers, and community organizations.

When asked for her overall goal, she said, "I urge people to reflect on their lives, and think about choices they make every day in regard to their health." "She

continued that individuals should

be encouraged to "celebrate what they do well, and select one or two small changes in such areas as physical activity, nutrition, sufficient sleep, or freedom from tobacco and alcohol dependency."

Ms. Yamashiro graduated from Mount Blue High School in Farmington, earned a degree in Community Health Education at the University of Maine in Farmington, and a Masters of Arts and Teaching at the University of Alaska in Juneau. She has taught elementary school for three years in Alaska and one year in Maine. During the summers she has been involved in guiding ice climbers on the glaciers and kayaking in Alaska.

One of the programs in which Ms. Yamashiro is involved is the Life Skills curriculum for grade five and an adaptation of that program for sixth graders.



Ms. Yamashiro works with students at the Canaan School.

Currently, she is meeting with sixth grades throughout the district to create public service announcements that deal with making healthy choices in their lives. Each group of students has selected a subject from the following topics: decision making, stress, communication skills, smoking, alcohol, self-esteem or peer pressure. After reading and discussing background material on their choice, the students then work on writing a script and taking pictures to effectively communicate their message to others. Work from each classroom will be combined in a video presentation and shared with their classmates.

Other programs promoted by Ms. Yamashiro include the "Wellness Team", made up of several staff members from each school that meets once per month

to support the well being of students and staff. A monthly newsletter called "Wellness News" may be viewed on the district Internet site.

The Community Health Educator at Redington Fairview Hospital collaborates with Ms. Yamashiro on another program called "Tar Wars" dealing with the use of tobacco.

Hour-long lessons in fourth

grade classrooms are followed by a poster contest. "Maine-ly Nutrition" and "Take Time" are two other programs available to teachers in the district. Recently, forty elementary teachers in the district have agreed to provide a minimum of twenty-five hours of nutrition education during the school year. Each teacher will receive free nutrition resources as well as \$100 to purchase nutrition supplies for the classroom.

These are just some of the responsibilities that fall under the guidance of the District Health Coordinator. MSAD #54 recognizes that student wellness and good nutrition are closely

Counselors Provide Valuable Resource

Another name for the four guidance counselors at Skowhegan Area High School could well be “Ambassadors to Education”. Their goal is to provide guidance to every student from yearly course registrations, decision-making, and gaining skills in problem solving to their individual choices of pursuits after graduation. “We offer a comprehensive program which addresses the individual needs of the students as they grow and evolve over their four years of high school,” said Dan Hylan, Guidance Director. To accomplish this, the counselors take developmental presentations to every classroom, arrange for special programs and speakers, and are always available to meet with students and parents on an individual basis.

Each class in the high school is assigned to one counselor who will follow those students throughout their four years. As freshmen, the members of the class of 2012 meet with Mr. Riley to focus mainly on self-exploration and the transition into high school. They are encouraged to consider all the different directions that they might like to follow, and to realize that their academic performance will play a large role in succeeding in their chosen field. As with all the counselors, Mr. Riley’s goal is to meet with

every student at least once during each semester. A special program for freshmen parents is scheduled for April 15 at 6 o’clock with Jeff Wright, Director of Admission at Maine Maritime Academy as the guest speaker.

Ms. Ryan’s work with members of the class of 2011



Guidance Counselor, Mr. Riley talks with a student.

includes further career exploration and a check on the completion of their freshmen year credits. Post secondary school opportunities are presented and discussed. Sophomores wanting to take classes at the Vocational Center need to complete their applications at this time.

Students in the class of 2010 meet with Ms. Willette-Johnson who helps them narrow down their choices. Students may plan to continue their education at a two or four year college, pursue a community college program, go into the military, join AmeriCorp or Job Corp, or go to work directly after high school. College fairs

and the State of Maine required SAT’s are scheduled for the junior year. A MELMAC Foundation grant provides for campus visits by every junior. Included in the destination choices are University of Maine in Orono, Augusta and Farmington, Eastern Maine and Kennebec Valley Community

Colleges, Husson, Thomas, Colby and Unity.

Mr. Hylan works with the members of the class of 2009 on specific planning for their chosen direction. Preparation of resumes, exploration of the job market, communication with recruiters from the military, and college application deadlines are all items to be pursued by different individuals at this

time. Emphasis is placed on the importance of the countless details involved in completing application requirements.

Throughout the year these Guidance Counselors are available to meet with parents and/or teachers concerning specific student questions. A Guidance Newsletter containing reminders, explanations, and announcements of meetings and other events is sent home with report cards each semester. Encouraging self-improvement and self-understanding, the Guidance Counselors are an important and valuable resource to all SAHS students.

Music For Every Student

“Music is life,” said Cheryl McGowan, MSAD #54 Music Department Head. “Wherever you



Ms. Snow works with SAMS student on the keyboard.

go, whatever you do, music will be there.” Music as a discipline teaches organizational skills which spread to all other areas of education. It relates to science, math, history and language arts, Ms. McGowan explained.

Music instruction, from simple rhythms and songs to jazz and pep bands, ensembles and individual instrumental lessons, is available to all students in MSAD #54. Classroom music is taught to all students from kindergarten through the seventh grade. Starting with movement, dance, songs and rhythm in the lower grades,



Mr. Ranger works with rhythm sticks

children move on to reading and writing music and learning musical terms and styles. Music instruction for grade four is divided into four parts, so that every student has nine weeks each of four disciplines. Included are singing, learning about the history of music and different instruments, playing the

recorder, and playing the violin. At this point, students have a general knowledge of vocal music, strings and wind instruments. They are also surprised to learn that they have been studying a foreign language as they learn musical terms in Italian.

In grade five, in addition to regular classroom music, students are given the opportunity of joining a chorus and/or taking lessons on their choice of instrument. Currently there are five hundred thirty-nine students in grades five through twelve who have opted to continue their musical education in this way. Performance is an important part of the music program.

Different groups often play for the school board, elementary schools, and community and sports events. On February 11, the district will host the District IV Jazz Festival at the high school. On March 17 (tentative) there will be a string and dance concert, and a “Choral-a-rama” with guest conductors is scheduled for April 8. Other events are listed on the Music Department web site and on the District Calendar in this newsletter.

People of all ages love music. A small baby responds to the soothing sound of a lullaby and the teenager enjoys the popular tunes on his iPod. We are surrounded by music whether it is on the radio or television or in an elevator or the



Ms. McGowan instructs a student tuba player.

grocery store. Music is calming and relaxing to all. At each age music allows students to be part of the world in which they want to live. “It helps to fulfill their need to be and express themselves,” Ms. McGowan said.

MSAD #54 is fortunate to be able to provide an excellent program that helps to provide a musical foundation for a lifetime of enjoyment and appreciation.

Special Education Services

The MSAD #54 Special Services Department serves over 500 children in kindergarten through grade 12 with services ranging from in-class assistance and consultation to individualized self-contained programs. Co-directed by Ann Belanger and Nancy Gordon, the department consists of thirty and one-half special education teachers, as well as a number of other service providers including school psychological services providers, speech/language therapists, an occupational therapist, a physical therapist, a behavioral consultant, and educational technicians. These services are mandated by both state and federal law under the Individuals with Disabilities Act. This law requires that students with disabilities be educated as much as possible with non-disabled peers. This benefits both the students with disabilities and their peers without disabilities. Acceptance and respect for students with disabilities can be readily observed in social exchanges in the hallways and classrooms of our schools.

“We have an incredible special education staff that provides quality services to students in our district,” commented Ann Belanger. She noted that more emotional and behavioral issues and an increase in autism have



Ms. Walker works with student.

been seen in recent years. “Our staff has to be flexible,” she said, “and they are.” For example, the assignments of educational technicians, under the supervision of special education teachers, vary from personal care to working in the classroom on academic tasks. They are trained on the skills that are needed to meet the individual student needs and they go where they are needed.

Special education programs in our district include Resource

Rooms in all elementary schools, five different Functional Life Skills programs, one behavioral program, and one program for students who are deaf. At the secondary level, the continuum of services also ranges from services provided in the general education classrooms to self-contained classes.

The special education staff works closely with parents and the general education staff to ensure that our students’ educational needs are met. At least once per year, a team meeting for each student is held to review progress and update the student’s individual educational plan. A new plan is written and distributed to parents and staff who work with the student, thereby ensuring that each student with a disability has an individualized plan based on input from parents, teachers, administrators, support staff, and the student.

Educational services for students with disabilities have evolved and improved greatly in recent years – a trend to which our MSAD #54 Special Services Department continues to contribute.



Healthy Lifestyle

Continued from Page 4

related to their physical and psychological well being and their readiness to learn. Encouraging habits of a healthy lifestyle at a young age will hopefully follow students throughout their adult years.

In January Canaan students enjoyed a daylong program of Native American studies presented by former Penobscot Nation Chief, Barry Dana.

District Calendar

March 6-7		SAHS will host Regional One-act Play contest
March 25		SAMS Jazz Performance for parents
April 8	5:30 PM	SAHS with Choral-a-rama with guest conductors
April 15	6:00 PM	Guidance Department program for freshmen parents Speaker: Jeff Wright, Director of Admissions, Maine Maritime Academy
April 16	6:00 PM	Canaan Fine Arts Night
April 30	6:00 PM	Mill Stream Elementary Spring Concert
May 4	6:30 PM	SAMS Spring Concert
May 13	7:00 PM	SAHS Spring Concert
May 20	6:00 PM	MCSS Spring Concert

Recent Masters Degree Recipients

Congratulations to these MSAD #54 Staff members who have recently received Masters degrees.

Karen Andrus • Special Education at MCSS
Scott Bosworth • Pathways at SAMS
Jenn Dorman • Special Education at SAMS
Kelly Hanscom • Guidance Counselor at SAMS
Christopher King • Special Education at SAHS
Nikki Reinholt • Special Education at Canaan
Dan Riley • Guidance Counselor at SAHS
Mary Swindells • Special Education at MCSS
Jean Walker • Resource Room at Cornville
Timothy Wess • Special Education at MSES

Postscripts from the Superintendent's Office

Please send questions or comments to Andrew McAuliff, Executive Editor, MSAD #54, Office of the Superintendent, 196 West Front St., Skowhegan, ME 04976 or e-mail amcauliff@msad54.org or call (207) 474 9508.

Layout Artist

Caleb Wiles
Digital Graphic Arts
Skowhegan Regional Vocational Center

Executive Editor

Andrew McAuliff

Editor, Writer, Photographer

Corrilla Hastings

Maine School Administration District #54

61 Academy Circle
Skowhegan, Maine 04976

U.S. Postage Paid
Non-Profit
Permit #30
Skowhegan, Maine
04976
ECR-WSS

Postal Customer